

# THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

*This bulletin is published for readers at home and abroad by the Religious Division of the Ministry of Information, London, to elucidate the spiritual issues at stake in the war, and to provide information concerning the British Churches in wartime, as well as their contribution to post-war reconstruction.*

Number 273

February 1st, 1945

## AN ENGLISH PRIEST IN PAPUA FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

Last week we printed the story of the heroic death of Alfred Sadd, a missionary of the Congregational Church in the Gilbert Islands. *The Church Times* (Jan. 19th) tells the story of the martyrdom of another missionary, of a quite different ecclesiastical tradition, but of a like faith and courage.

The following account, written by a Roman Catholic medical officer, has just reached this country from Australia. It describes his experiences in Papua, when the Japanese landed at Buna, and his meeting with the Rev. Vivian Redlich, a missionary who refused to leave his people, and was killed by the Japanese:

"They were dark days for us all, but perhaps for none so dark as for that heroic little band of Anglican missionaries who quite voluntarily had decided that their duty to their God and to the people bade them remain at their posts.

"I had the privilege of knowing each of them, and admire their missionary spirit that prompted them to make a decision so much opposed to the dictates of self-interest. Before all other considerations, and in spite of what other people might think and say, these missionaries decided to remain to carry on the work of God among their coloured people.

"I am not an Anglican, but in my official capacity as a Travelling Medical Assistant for the Papuan Civil Government had been stationed in the Buna area for more than a year immediately prior to the Japanese landing there, and witnessed the excellent work done by the Anglican missionaries. I knew each one of them, and each had discussed with me the reasons that had prompted them to remain. In each case the reasons given were the same, although couched in

different words. It was God's work. Their place was with their people, especially in their hour of darkness and trial.

"Saturday, July 25th, 1942, is a day I shall not easily forget. Early that day I had escaped from the Japanese mainly through the help of one of the Sangara mission boys. Much to my surprise, I learned from the natives that Fr. Redlich, who a couple of months previously had returned very ill to the mission headquarters, was again in the district and in hiding quite close to the mission house.

"About six o'clock in the evening, with a few natives, I left one of the villages to get in touch with Fr. Redlich. Just on dusk I reached his shelter. The village people had built him a lean-to on the side of a hill, and had posted watchers along the track.

### On the Beach, Alone

"From Fr. Vivian I learnt that in the mission boat he had arrived at Oro Bay as the Japanese were shelling Buna. By working hard, he landed during the night fifteen tons of supplies and concealed them in the bush. He spoke of the tremendous struggle he had had with himself on the beach. 'Would he return with the boat or not?' He admitted that his nature shrank from the sacrifice, and with a sinking heart he stood on the beach and watched the boat that might have borne him, too, to safety sail out of the bay.

"After the departure of the boat, Fr. Vivian had made his way quickly back to Sangara. He found the Japanese everywhere, and about to destroy the mission.

"When I arrived at the shelter there was quite a crowd of natives round about.

*Distributed by*

**BRITISH INFORMATION SERVICES**

*An Agency of The British Government*

**30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.**



Fr. Vivian spoke to them thus: 'I am your missionary. I have come back to you because I knew you would need your father. I am not going to run away from you. I am going to remain to help you as long as you will let me. To-morrow is Sunday. I shall say Mass, and any who wish may communicate.' Shortly after dark he returned to the mission house to collect some church equipment. He returned about midnight and told me that as yet nothing had been touched in the mission, but the Japanese had told the people of their intention to destroy the place on the Sunday.

### The Last Mass

"Shortly after dawn he woke me up saying: 'There is a big number of people here. I am going down to say Mass.' He began to vest, and was nearly finished when a native boy rushed to us crying out: 'Father! Doctor! Go; do not wait! During the night Embogi came and had a look at where you are, and has just gone to tell the Japanese, because he wants them to come and kill you.'

"There was a dead silence. I looked at Fr. Vivian. He bowed his head in prayer for a few moments, and then said to the people: 'To-day is Sunday. It is God's Day. I shall say Mass. We shall worship God. Why has Embogi done this? Does he hate us? Have we ever harmed him?' From here and there among the crowd came the reply: 'Embogi is not a Christian.'

"Turning to me, Fr. Vivian said: 'Will you remain for Mass?' 'Yes,' I said, and remained. I do not think I have ever witnessed a more devout congregation. The fervour expressed in those faces would have equalled that of the early Christians assisting at Mass in some hidden catacomb. Like those early Christians, these New Guinea Christians were assisting at Mass at the risk of their lives.

"The dense silence of the jungle was broken only by the sound of the priest's voice praying for his people. Then came the rustle of movement as those bare brown feet moved near the altar at the time of Communion. He who was about to go down to his own bitter Gethsemane and passion offered up for the last time before the throne of God for his people the saving Sacrifice of Christ. As the Sacrifice of Christ had its justification on Easter morning, so too in God's own time will the sacrifice of His loyal and devoted priest, Fr. Redlich.

### We Shall Never Forget

"After the Mass the people quietly dispersed. Fr. Vivian and I moved on. The

following day it became necessary for us to part. With sorrow not unmixed with a feeling of deep admiration for his courage, I bade him 'Farewell and good luck!' He was going to remain with his people, moving about among them. My own duty bade me escape.

"The above account of my meeting with Fr. Redlich and his actions show clearly that he was a true missionary and a brave man. The decision he made cost him his life. He died by enemy hands on Buna beach. As his head was struck from his body and the white sand of the beach crimsoned with his blood there died a missionary whom we in Papua shall never forget. He died because he remained true to his trust. When he might have fled he did not flee. He remained because he considered it his duty to remain, and because he remained he died. To us who knew him, his memory will never die, and ever shall we think of him as a brave man, 'strong in faith'."

The Rev. Vivian Redlich was the son of Canon E. Basil Redlich, of Little Bowden, Market Harborough. He joined an Australian Bush Brotherhood in 1935, and later became an S.P.G. missionary in the New Guinea Mission. Eight other missionaries, including Fr. Redlich's fiancée, were also killed by the Japanese.

### DEAN FJELLBU BECOMES BISHOP OF LIBERATED NORWEGIAN TERRITORY

The Royal Norwegian Government Information Office makes the following announcement:—

Dean Arne Fjellbu, one of the doughtiest champions of the Norwegian Church in the struggle against Nazi tyranny, has been appointed Bishop of the liberated See of Haalogaland in North Norway, by a Royal Order in Council of December 15th, 1944.

Bishop Fjellbu will be responsible for all administration of Church affairs in this area, with the special authority which the extraordinary conditions require. Before his elevation, Bishop Fjellbu was already in North Norway, acting as chaplain to the Norwegian Forces there. He had earlier escaped to Sweden from the lonely village of Andenes in the Lofoten Islands, to which he was banished by the Nazis in June, 1943.

Arne Fjellbu will always be remembered in connection with the incident which occurred in Trondheim, the Norwegian cathedral town, on February 1st, 1942, the day on which Vidkun Quisling was appointed "Minister-President" of Norway. Fjellbu



refused to conduct a service in honour of Quisling's appointment, and insisted, despite a Nazi ban, on conducting his own usual service in the afternoon. A great number of Norwegians who came to hear the Dean were prevented from entering the cathedral by armed guards, and they remained in the cathedral square, singing "A Mighty Fortress is our God." Dean Fjellbu preached his sermon nevertheless, and afterwards protested strongly to the "Ministry of Church and Education." The only reply was a curt note to Dean Fjellbu that he was dismissed from his office.

This crowning violation of the rights of the Church led to the resignation of all the bishops of the Norwegian Church, and the cessation of co-operation with the Quisling State. At Easter, 1942, the mass of the clergy also resigned.

"Dean Fjellbu," said the bishops in their letter of resignation, "has justice on his side. His service to the Church has been unimpeachable. He has the full respect and confidence of his congregation and his superiors. . . . With full knowledge of the facts, the Ministry of Church and Education, instead of defending the right of the Church and the congregations to take part in Divine worship, deliberately chooses brutally to depose the Minister who has done his duty as a servant of the Church."

The Quisling regime's coercive measures against the Norwegian Church have not diminished since 1942. In a statement by well-informed clerical quarters in Norway, it has just been said that "in some ways 1944 was the most difficult year in the struggle of the Norwegian Church although it was not noted for great events and public protests as in the first phase of the struggle."

Bishop Berggrav, the Norwegian Primate, has entered his third year under house-arrest. Professor Hallesby has now been at Grini concentration camp for almost a year. The other members of the Provisional Church Council have been banished and scattered all over the country. Their freedom of action is continually reduced. The leading members of the Norwegian Mission Society are still at Berg concentration camp.

The number of congregations deprived of their shepherds has increased disquietingly in the current year. From the Church's viewpoint, the statement continues, this gives cause for grave anxiety. Many children are not being christened, and instruction for confirmation is no longer being given.

At the beginning of last year 50 clergymen were banished and 20 imprisoned. At the beginning of 1945 the numbers are 104

and 40 respectively. A feature of 1944 was that the banished clergymen were concentrated in the little town of Lillehammer to limit further their freedom of action. Now they have been transferred to Helge Island, on Lake Mjoesen, which is to all intents and purposes a large concentration camp.

Although the Quislings are deposing clergymen, they are not able to fill the vacancies. The recruitment of Quisling "clergymen" numbered only six in 1944, making 31 for the whole period. And some of these "clergymen" have not held more than one or two services in the last three or four years. Even at Christmas the churches were closed.

The Church struggle also cost heavily in lives in 1944. The clergymen Boge and Thu died in captivity in their best years.

Nevertheless, concludes the statement, the policy which the men of the Church adopted in 1942 has been maintained: to be faithful towards God and their land and people unto the last.

## AMERICAN THEOLOGIANS ON THE WAR AND CHRISTIAN FAITH

*Christianity and Crisis*, the American journal, in some ways corresponding to *The Christian News Letter*, writes:

"The Commission on the Relation of the Church to the War in the Light of the Christian Faith, appointed two years ago by the Federal Council of Churches, has made its report. The Commission, of which Professor Robert Calhoun was the chairman, and which included four members of the editorial committee of *Christianity and Crisis*, was able to make a unanimous report on the main religious and theological issues involved. This was an extraordinary achievement in view of the wide range of convictions represented on the Commission. Differences appear in the discussion of the support of and participation in war by Christians, but this issue in this particular study was subordinate. 'A majority of the Commission,' as the report says, 'believe that to-day war against the Axis Powers, by all needful measures is, in fact, justified.' A minority (slightly less than a third as may be inferred from the publicly known views of most of the members) adhere to the pacifist position. It is important to emphasize that the primary purpose of the report was to deal with a deeper level of problems for Christian faith than the problem of participation *versus* non-participation in war. This report may well be an important landmark in the development of an œcumenical theology in America."



## God's Judgment in the War

Christianity and Crisis quotes from a section of the Report.

*"Divine judgment in the war can be plainly seen at two levels. First, as we have noted, there is a natural and moral order of creation that God maintains against all man's wayward efforts in peace and in war. For human persons, that order has special significance in these respects: that every man is in his essential nature a responsible person, as well as a natural being; that all men are interdependent, as well as dependent upon their natural environment with its network of causal processes; and that the primary demand upon every man in this situation is love, for God, for men as children of God, and for nature as man's temporal home. Man may act, in both peace and war, as though these primary conditions of his life did not exist, but they hold fast and his denials in thought and act bring calamity upon himself, his fellows, and his natural home. Divine judgment is not vengeful. It is inexorable. And in war, more vividly than in quieter times, men can see its fearful majesty. In times when human conflict operates below the threshold of armed warfare, men sow with busy hands the winds of private and public aggression or negligence, of headstrong ignorance or cunning treachery. In times of open warfare, they reap the hurricane of outraged human life and divine power. In a terrible way, the fury of war vindicates the existence and inescapability of divine law.*

*"Secondly, God's judgment in war times negates not merely the selfish conduct of men, but also their inadequate ideals for living. There are many of our accustomed ways of action that we are ready to acknowledge to be wrong, even though usually we hope that the fitting penalty for them may somehow be escaped. But other ways of ours seem to us surely right, and the ideals we hold often seem to us beyond criticism. It is hard not to think we know what is right even when we do otherwise. Service to one's country, or to one's church, for example, seems surely right, and the ideal of patriotism or of church loyalty that moves us in our most devoted moments seems wholly good. Precisely at these points of human self-confidence the judgment of God cuts deep. The very group loyalty in which we take pride and find a basis for self-righteousness is shown up in the fierce light of warfare to be tinctured with deadly poison. For uncritical group loyalty is a potent source of war, it helps to intensify hatred while war*

goes on, it is most characteristic of the more aggressive and tyrannous nations in the present war, and it can retard for generations our attempts to establish a peaceful world when this war has run its course. The judgment of God writ large in wartime says: 'Patriotism is not enough.' Human righteousness at any level thus far achieved is not enough. That is true in times of comparative quiet. It becomes glaringly evident in times of war.

*"Is then war itself to be called 'a divine judgment,' or an instrument thereof? Does God decree war to punish the waywardness of men? We have said no. War is not divinely ordained, any more than slums or slavery. God's will is always that men shall live at peace with one another and with Him. This is true at all times and without any exception. This refers not simply to armed warfare. It is not God's will that men shall carry on covert strife with one another, and with Him, under the name of peace. When that is done, His will is already being violated, and the outbreak of open war makes that fact plain. It is not God's will that war shall come upon mankind, at any time, nor that it be regarded as a suitable instrument for good. It is God's will that the primary order of natural and human life be maintained, and in presence of that order some sorts of human conduct bring war. The order itself is confirmed and vindicated. The specific decisions that make war break out are man's decisions, not God's. Moreover, the specific decisions we make thereafter, in seeking to do 'the right as God gives us to see the right,' are still our decisions, not God's. War is not, then, 'a judgment of God' in the sense that God wills it as a punishment for men. It serves to reveal and vindicate the judgment of God that upholds inexorably the order of His world even though in the presence of that order some combinations of human decision and natural causation, in resistance to God's will for peace, bring war.*

*"God's judgment, in a word, is never merely punitive. Man brings down punishment when he acts in violation of God's law made dynamic by God's will. Yet that very law is even in its rigor a gift without which neither natural nor personal life could go on, and the will that maintains it is even in its unyieldingness a will to more abundant life. Divine judgment is redemptive in purpose, and it becomes so in effect, as far as men are brought by its unceasing pressures to respond in repentance and faith."*